United Nations A/C.3/52/SR.7

General Assembly
Fifty-second session

Official Records

Distr. General
11 November 1997

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 7th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 20 October 1997, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Busacca ..... (Italy)

Contents

Agenda item 105: Advancement of women*

Agenda item 106: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women*

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of the publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

97-82150 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 105: Advancement of women (A/52/3, A/52/38/Rev.1, A/52/116-S/1997/317, A/52/300, 326, 337, 352, 355, 356, 408, A/52/447-S/1997/775 and A/52/460)

Agenda item 106: Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/113-E/1997/18, A/52/281, A/52/447-S/1997/775 and A/52/460)

1. **Ms. King** (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women), introducing the items, said she was encouraged by the growing recognition among Member States that the pursuit of women's equality was a prerequisite for reducing poverty, enhancing growth and promoting the well-being of society as a whole. The year had been a positive one for women and gender issues. A large number of projects had been initiated within the United Nations system as part of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), while some 73 Governments had responded to the Secretariat's request to submit national strategies and action plans outlining measures to implement the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission on the Status of Women had adopted agreed conclusions on four critical areas of concern identified in the Platform, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had, for the first time, met for two annual sessions.

2. It was important, however, in keeping with the goal of gender mainstreaming, that concern for gender issues should not be confined to bodies with a specific mandate on women's affairs and that a gender perspective should inform all activities on national and international agendas. There had been encouraging developments in that regard. The two international tribunals established in the wake of the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda had both made explicit reference in their founding statutes to sexual violence as a strategy of war, and it was to be hoped that any future permanent international criminal court would draw on their experience in that area. In Afghanistan, a large number of United Nations bodies were participating in peace-building and restructuring projects. It had become clear that their activities should better reflect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, particularly with respect to the equal rights of men and women. It was anticipated that, through the intervention of the inter-agency task force on gender issues in Afghanistan, which she was chairing, gender issues would be more fully taken into account in future initiatives.

3. Gradually, gender issues were moving from the wings to centre stage. Through the implementation of the Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the pursuit of gender equality was now recognized not as a special concern of women and girls, but as a goal of society as a whole, an approach which brought new obligations for policy makers both at national and international levels. They must now consider the impact of their policy decisions on women and men, and how those policies would contribute to the goal of gender equality. It was no longer enough to assume that women, as part of society, were automatically addressed by policy makers. As to the United Nations, Member States must ensure that the gender perspective was adequately taken into account in every aspect of the Organization's work and, in particular, during the reform process, when attention must be given to the goal of achieving 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000.

4. **Ms. Erturk** (Director, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)), introducing the Secretary-General's report on the activities of INSTRAW (A/52/352), said that the Institute's programmes over the past year had reflected the major concerns of the international community as set out in the programmes and plans of action of the recent global United Nations conferences, particularly the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). INSTRAW had assisted the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women in eliminating gender discrimination at the policy level within the United Nations.

5. The Institute had also sought, through a number of initiatives, to work more closely with other United Nations bodies concerned with economic and social issues, in line with the recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Economic and Social Council. Those initiatives had included participation in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference conducted by the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality; the hosting of two expert group meetings, one concerning the impact of gender difference on political decision-making and conflict resolution and the other on the theme "Women, population and sustainable development"; and the launching, in cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Fund for Women of an Internet page entitled Women Watch. The Institute's Board of Trustees attached particular importance

to the expansion of such cooperation both within and outside the United Nations system.

6. INSTRAW sought to promote the empowerment of women and, in particular, their inclusion as equal partners in development. Accordingly, its activities were structured around four priority programmes, namely, women, economic and political empowerment; statistics and indicators on gender issues; women, environment and sustainable development; and women, media and communication. The activities included the enhancement of statistical methodologies, which were vital in evaluating the Institute's programmes and projects; the preparation of a multi-media modular package on women, environmental management and sustainable development, in cooperation with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization in Turin; and the drafting, currently in progress, of a manual to assist women's organizations in maximizing the use of computer-mediated communication technologies in all their activities.

7. INSTRAW, the only entity within the United Nations system devoted to research and training for the advancement of women and their integration in development, was funded solely through voluntary contributions. She therefore appealed to Member States to strengthen financial support for the Institute to enable it to continue and expand its activities.

8 **Ms. Olson** (Deputy Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)), introducing the report on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/52/300), said that the activities of UNIFEM over the past year in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action had focused on three thematic areas, namely, strengthening women's economic capacity; engendering governance and leadership; and promoting women's rights and the elimination of violence against women. Through its work in developing countries, UNIFEM had sought to enable women to put into practice their vision for themselves, their families, their communities and the world, as advocated in the Beijing Platform for Action. Financial and technical assistance had been provided to Governments and women's organizations in more than 35 countries.

9 She listed a number of projects in various regions, including an initiative in the Middle East aimed at establishing national committees for women; talks held in South Asia between government ministers, heads of United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations on such topics as closer cooperation on the issue of trafficking in women and girls, the amendment of legislation on women's land and property rights, and research on structural-adjustment-programme safety nets; and the translation in Africa of the Beijing Platform for Action into local languages.

10. UNIFEM was involved in a number of joint initiatives with United Nations bodies, including the establishment with INSTRAW and the Division for the Advancement of Women of an Internet site, Women Watch. UNIFEM also participated in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality.

11. UNIFEM was committed to eliminating violence against women, which was a major obstacle to development and women's empowerment. The Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women, established in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/166, had received contributions from a number of Governments, which would be used to finance such initiatives as educational campaigns; training of police officers, judges, health workers and public administrators; and improvement of the advocacy skills and legal literacy of women's groups.

12. The Beijing Platform for Action had recognized the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as the bill of rights for women. UNIFEM was supporting efforts to achieve universal ratification of the Convention and to raise awareness of its provisions among women's groups. Women from non-governmental organizations in six States parties to the Convention had been able, through UNIFEM sponsorship, to attend an orientation and training workshop during which they had observed the work of the Committee at its January 1997 session.

13. While significant progress had been made in implementing the Platform for Action over the past year, much remained to be done before women's empowerment could be transformed into a reality, with women controlling resources and influencing decision-making structures, enabling them to transform the lives of their communities.

14. **Ms. Schosseler** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland, said that, while much progress had been made since the holding of the First World Conference on Women (Mexico City, 1975), the goal of true equality between men and women remained unrealized. The European Union supported the measures undertaken by the United Nations towards the advancement of women, in particular the efforts aimed at mainstreaming a gender perspective in all United Nations activities and had welcomed in that connection, the agreed conclusions adopted

by the Economic and Social Council at its 1997 substantive session (A/52/37).

15. The decision to authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hold a second annual session was an important step, and would help the Committee to reduce its backlog. She welcomed the growing number of accessions to the Convention, but noted that the expression by certain States parties of reservations ran counter to the spirit of the Convention. She looked forward to constructive discussion on the draft optional protocol to the Convention at the next session of the Commission of the Status of Women, the open-ended working group having completed its first examination of the draft. There was a need for greater mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the work of all the human rights treaty monitoring bodies.

16. The European Union welcomed the appointment of Ms. Angela King as Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and supported the goals set out in the General Assembly resolutions on the advancement of women within the Secretariat, in particular the objective of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000.

17. Special attention should be paid to posts at level P-5 and above. The review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21 (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio, 1992) during the special session of the General Assembly from 23 to 27 June 1997 had shown that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into the process of implementing the recommendations of the global United Nations conferences could be problematic. The European Union therefore urged that the gender perspective should be more fully taken into account during the forthcoming examination of the follow-up to the other recent major conferences.

18. The European Union was committed to the advancement of women. It had adopted a substantial body of legislation aimed at eliminating discrimination against women. In accordance with a new directive, the concept of equality between men and women would be integrated into all the Union's development cooperation programmes. Detailed reviews of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action were conducted annually at ministerial level, while each member State had devised its own national implementation strategy. Following the recent Intergovernmental Conference in Amsterdam, the Maastricht Treaty had been amended with a view to reinforcing the principle of equality between men and women, in particular by introducing the concept of affirmative action to encourage women to seek posts in those areas where they were under-represented. The Union was committed to combating violence against women and had taken a number of measures to that end within the framework of the Daphnée programme. The vulnerability of women migrant workers and refugees and women in conflicts was a cause for particular concern.

19. The European Union was convinced that women's rights were human rights. The fiftieth anniversary in 1998 of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should provide an opportunity to consider how the realization by women and girls of their rights could be better integrated into United Nations human rights activities.

20. In the year 2000, Member States would meet to review the progress made in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action. Delegations should begin consideration at the current session of the General Assembly of the best way and the most appropriate place in which to conduct that review. The implementation of the Platform for Action required a strong political commitment and the allocation of adequate resources. She was encouraged in that regard by the decision of Member States committed to the 20:20 initiative to integrate a gender perspective into its implementation, as mentioned in the Beijing Platform. In the implementation of the Platform, non-governmental organizations also had a role to play. Member States should therefore encourage all actors in civil society to make their own contribution to the process of translating the goals of the Platform for Action into reality.

21. **Mr. Jabir** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the international community had committed itself to the advancement of women in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The implementation of the Platform for Action would enhance the social, economic and political empowerment of women, thus achieving people-centred development. Statistics indicated that 70 per cent of the one billion poor people in the world were women. Their empowerment would therefore be an important contribution towards poverty eradication. While Governments had the primary responsibility for implementing such commitments, an enabling environment at the international level would complement national action.

22. Many Governments in the Group of 77 had developed strategies for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action despite their limited capacities and a harsh international economic environment. They therefore welcomed the activities undertaken by the United Nations system, as described in document A/52/281. They hoped that the

intention of the World Bank to integrate a gender perspective in all its programmes, would be translated into action. They also welcomed the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's initiative to promote women entrepreneurs in six African countries, and anticipated that the programme would be expanded to other developing countries. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women at its 1997 session (E/1997/27) would accelerate the implementation of the Platform for Action. Moreover, the Microcredit Summit, described in document A/52/113-E/1997/18, was a welcome initiative in that it had launched a global movement to provide 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially women, with credit for self-employment and other financial services by the year 2005.

23. An adverse economic environment had made it difficult for the countries of the Group of 77 to embark on full implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women. The debt burden coupled with the adverse effects of the structural adjustment programme prescribed for those countries limited their capacity to provide basic needs. In all cases, the women and children were affected most. There had been a decline in funds from external sources. There was an urgent need to reverse the overall decline of official development assistance (ODA) by the developed countries to meet the agreed target of 0.7 per cent. It was also important to urge implementation of the 20:20 initiative, as an important contribution to the empowerment of women.

24. Liberalization and globalization of the world economy were adversely affecting the Group of 77 countries. Women were affected most. The World Trade Organization and related international organizations should take measures to mitigate the adverse effects of the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements. Those measures should include long-term financial and technical support, transfer of technology and equitable trade regimes with developing countries. Development could be achieved through collective efforts. If the international community was committed to promoting and protecting women's rights, efforts should not be spared to create an enabling international economic environment that would allow the countries of the Group to meet their responsibility in advancing the empowerment of women.

25. **Mr. Kasanda** (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Southern African Development Community, said that the Republic of the Congo and Seychelles had joined the Community.

26. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had made strides to highlight the global situation of women in terms of the constraints which women had to overcome. Southern African women had similar constraints. Women constituted the majority of the population in Africa and were in fact one of the continent's greatest assets. They were responsible for 60 to 80 per cent of food production and were involved in the entire food chain, from production to marketing. African women provided essential goods and services to rural and urban consumers. Women were responsible for sustaining local ecosystems and biodiversity. Women headed one third of all African households. Yet, out of one billion people who lived in poverty, more than 60 per cent were women. Women were the majority of the world's illiterate. In Africa, women worked many more hours a week than men and were mostly unpaid. Moreover, women earned 30 to 40 per cent less than men for doing equal work. Land tenure practices usually ensured male control of activities and the allocation of the best land and agricultural input for export crops. Land ownership facilitated access to a range of benefits and the disproportionate enjoyment by men of rights to land often excluded women from those benefits.

27. Every social grouping in the world had specific traditional cultural practices and beliefs that were beneficial to all members and should be encouraged. However, the Platform for Action emphasized that a number of traditional practices and taboos were extremely detrimental to the health and status of women and girls. He urged Member States to address the situation of women, in particular those of Africa, in the light of the harmful nature of those practices and their violation of international human rights laws.

28. If the United Nations was to be successful in facilitating the advancement of women, its activities had to concentrate and become grounded in the actual situation of women. He congratulated the Secretary-General on the report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (A/52/300) for its practical approach. He also welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/281), as it was very important that entities of the United Nations system reported on their follow-up to the Platform for Action.

29. However, the reports would have been even more useful if they had given more detail in terms of the activities undertaken, and they could have also given more detail regarding new human resources, financial means and structural changes made. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, for instance, had set up a trust fund project on follow-up to the implementation of major global conferences, including a component on follow-up to the Platform for Action. However, it should have reported on the actual activities undertaken to enhance the participation

of entrepreneurs in the economies of the developed countries. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had carried out a number of activities targeting girls and women. A more detailed report on the regional strategy to prevent female genital mutilation in eastern Africa would have been welcome. More information could also have been provided on the United Nations Population Fund's process of assessing the extent to which gender issues and perspectives were being mainstreamed within its funded programmes in 12 countries.

30. It was very important that relevant information with sufficient detail should be provided on follow-up in the United Nations system and he believed that it could be achieved through enhancing the activities of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. He also urged various entities to consider pursuing partnership ventures, such as a partnership between the World Health Organization and UNICEF in their activities to prevent female genital mutilation in Africa, instead of their executing such projects separately. Although the United Nations was doing its fair share to ensure the empowerment of women, more needed to be done in the critical areas of programmes providing basic education, skills training, basic health, nutrition and family planning and credit to encourage self-employment and income generation.

31. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was a critical component of efforts for the advancement of women. The Committee should do more to advocate gender-sensitive laws and administrative practices as well as to enhance its role by publicizing its work in order to ensure that women everywhere were able to enjoy their rights. More resources should therefore be allocated to the Committee. In that regard, he commended the United Nations Development Fund for Women for organizing a briefing for the annual meeting of Special Rapporteurs (A/52/300, para. 17). The briefing had focused on the integration of gender concerns into human rights reporting. He also encouraged more frequent interaction between the Committee and the Special Rapporteurs.

32. He supported the decisions taken by that Committee, particularly the suggestion that the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should make funds available to promote the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the work of the Committee. It should also be used to facilitate seminars on such issues as reservations concerning the Convention. That suggestion should be endorsed by the General Assembly. He would also like to see the efforts of the High Commissioner for Human Rights supported by adequate human and financial resources. He looked forward to the mid-term review in 1998 of the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, as it was anticipated that the review would address the question of violence against women and girls, including migrant women workers.

33. **Ms. Moreno** (Paraguay), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Rio Group, said that the Group's commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had been manifested repeatedly. Its members firmly supported the cause of the rights and equality of women in the world. There had been six regional conferences on the integration of women in economic and social development of Latin America and the Caribbean. The regional conference held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, had approved the regional programme of action for the women of Latin America and the Caribbean for the 1995-2001 period. The regional conference to take place in Santiago de Chile in November 1997 would provide an opportunity to evaluate the advances achieved in the region since the Beijing Conference.

34. The implementation of the Platform for Action was the primary responsibility of Governments, which had to implement specific measures to achieve equality between men and women. The Governments should inform the international community, particularly the Division for the Advancement of Women, of the progress made. The Commission on the Status of Women played a major role in the follow-up to the Beijing Conference and acted as a catalyst in the integration of a gender perspective in policies and programmes. She urged the Commission to continue examining the priority areas of the Beijing Platform, such as education and training of women, women and the economy, women in power and in decision-making, and women and the environment. In motivating women's participation in decision-making, education was of fundamental importance. Greater awareness would empower women to have a say in public policies. It was also important to promote the training or non-formal education as a means to achieve sustained economic growth.

35. The Rio Group welcomed the Secretary-General's report on the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women (A/52/281). The report outlined the progress achieved in implementing the Declaration and Platform for Action by various agencies of the United Nations system. The issue of violence against women was on the public agenda of the countries of the Rio Group, which took careful note of the Secretary-General's reports on traffic in women and girls (A/52/355) and violence against women migrant workers (A/52/356). The latter issue was of great concern to the Group, which welcomed the report submitted to the

Commission on Human Rights by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women (A/52/356, paras. 41-43). In that connection, the Rio Group of countries, at their recent summit, had emphasized the responsibility of the States of origin and destination of the migrant workers to strengthen cooperation on migratory issues. It had urged that measures should be taken to ensure the full exercise of migrant workers' human rights as well as their social and economic well-being.

36. The worldwide phenomenon of the feminization of poverty was also severely felt in the region. Women had to be integrated into development in order to eradicate the structural causes of poverty and, in turn, poverty itself. At their summit in 1996, the countries of the Rio Group had reaffirmed their Governments' determination to overcome poverty, malnutrition, marginality, lack of access to health care services and illiteracy through policies that led to sustainable economic development. They had urged the international financial institutions to supplement national efforts to combat poverty with funding and technical assistance.

37. The Rio Group welcomed the measures adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women in relation to the eradication of poverty and also the Economic and Social Council's decision to carry out in 1999 a general review of that subject. The Group urged that special attention should be given to the contribution and the needs of women, particularly in the rural sector.

38. The Rio Group called on those countries that had not yet ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to do so, and hoped that negotiations on the elaboration of an optional protocol of the Convention (E/1997/27, annex III) would be expedited. That protocol would constitute an important step in efforts to achieve equality of women in the area of human rights.

39. In addition to national Governments' efforts, there was also a need for participation by other sectors such as non-governmental organizations, local government and cooperatives, and the role of the media should not be underestimated. The participation of non-governmental organizations in implementing the Platform for Action was crucial, and they should be encouraged to play a major part in the work of the Commission on the Status of Women.

40. The States members of the Rio Group also attached great importance to the status of women in the Secretariat, and welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts, as described in his report (A/52/408), to achieve an equal gender distribution within the Secretariat by the year 2000. The appointment of women to high-level posts and their involvement in the most vital areas of the Organization should be encouraged. Women's access to decision-making posts was an increasingly central issue; the countries of the Rio Group also attached great importance to the need to increase the participation of women in State institutions, and measures of "positive discrimination" were being implemented in several of those countries. The participation of women had increased significantly in many areas where it had previously been minimal. Such progress had been promoted by the existence in all the countries of the Rio Group of government offices dealing with women's issues and gender equality, which were working to incorporate a gender perspective in government policies and programmes; in some cases their work had led to the creation of national plans for equal opportunities.

41. The States members of the Rio Group would continue their efforts to achieve equality and human rights within the framework of international agreements and the commitments undertaken in the Beijing Declaration.

42. **Mrs. Hildrum** (Norway) welcomed the Organization's efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities. There had been some positive developments but much remained to be done. The slow process of increasing the number of women in the Secretariat was still a matter of concern.

43. If human rights were fully implemented in all countries, the quality of life for men and women would have improved, but the improvement for women in particular would be much greater. There was therefore a need to intensify gender perspective within the area of human rights. Norway greatly appreciated the efforts of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, whose reports were instrumental in increasing international awareness of the problem. Her calls on the international community to put pressure on Governments to eradicate violence against women were very timely. That social problem threatened women's enjoyment of human rights, and the responsibility to improve the situation rested with national authorities. Awareness of the issue in the Nordic countries had increased over the past 20 years owing to public policies, and an active women's movement had been instrumental in that regard.

44. Violence against women was generally committed by men. It was therefore very important to focus on men, whose violent behaviour was often related to power or the lack thereof. It was her Government's experience that 80 per cent of men who had received treatment for such behaviour had not again resorted to violence.

45. It was difficult to combat domestic violence in many countries because prosecution depended on the victims'

determination to press charges. Over the past decades, Norway had focused more on the victims of violence in its criminal law; the authorities had full responsibility for prosecuting cases of violence, so women and children were relieved of the responsibility and of the psychological strain involved in pressing charges.

46. The Special Rapporteur had also called for new international standards and mechanisms with regard to trafficking in women and prostitution, which were complex problems for individual States, in that they were often part of international organized crime. Trafficking in women and girls represented a serious violation of human rights. Her delegation intended to co-sponsor draft resolutions on trafficking in women and girls and on traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls.

47. Torture was a form of violence for which the State was in many cases responsible. Gender-specific torture was increasingly being recognized as a grave problem, particularly in prisons, where women were frequently subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence. The European Court of Human Rights, in addressing such an issue in a recent case, had held that the rape of a person in custody by an official of the State was a particularly grave and detestable form of mistreatment.

48. More important than establishing new human rights instruments was the implementation of those already existing. In the case of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, it was unfortunate that many States had made far-reaching reservations, some of which were incompatible with the spirit of the Convention; her delegation called upon all such States to reconsider their reservations and to grant women their human rights.

49. For women's rights to be fully enjoyed, there was a need to strengthen international human rights instruments. Norway had participated actively in efforts to prepare an optional protocol to the Convention, and her delegation hoped that a draft would be agreed upon at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women; that would make a substantial contribution to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

50. **Ms. Monroy** (Mexico) said her delegation attached great importance to the issue of women's rights; rapid follow-up to the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women showed the determination of the international community to give effect to the conclusions of that Conference. Her Government reiterated its commitment to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and was carrying out a series of measures to that end, including the incorporation of a gender perspective in national development programmes. A national programme for education, health and nutrition had recently been established, giving explicit recognition to the needs of women and girls. Mexico had also created training programmes to improve women's access to health care, as well as the quality of services, and to promote awareness of and respect for their sexual and reproductive rights.

51. The role of the media in improving women's image was emphasized in the Platform for Action, and her Government had begun a campaign to promote gender equality by publicizing women's role in society, and by developing indicators for more precise evaluation of the situation of women, in order to move forward with the elaboration of programmes to overcome existing inequalities. At the regional level, particular attention had been paid to the eradication of violence against women, and a series of training sessions for judges would shortly be held in Mexico on the prevention, punishment and eradication of such violence and the elimination of gender discrimination.

52. Her Government believed that international cooperation was essential for the implementation of the Declaration and Platform for Action. The incorporation of a gender perspective in all the activities of the United Nations required perseverance. Mexico had taken an active part in the seminars and workshops on related subjects organized by various United Nations agencies. It was desirable to strengthen programmes for the exchange of successful experiences.

53. Worthwhile efforts had already been made to fulfil the commitments undertaken at the Fourth World Conference on Women. However, greater efforts were required in order to ensure the success of the review to be carried out in the year 2000. Her Government would continue working to build a society which was more and more free, open and unprejudiced, and would make untiring efforts to ensure that equality and full development would become part of everyday life for women and girls.

54. **Ms. van Kuilenburg-Lodder** (Netherlands) recalled that 50 years had passed since the Commission on the Status of Women had been set up to promote women's rights. And its achievements were numerous: women's rights had become an integral part of the political agenda; 161 States were now parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the United Nations and its Member States had recognized women's reproductive rights. Such successes provided women with the strength to continue fighting for their rights. The results

of the Fourth World Conference on Women had been achieved by women who had displayed uncompromising strength and solidarity, undaunted by setbacks.

55. The time had come to translate women's rights, which had been recognized on paper all over the world, into equal treatment in practice. Women's influence on decision-making depended on the positions they held at all levels of public administration. To achieve the goal of equal participation, political parties and authorities should present more female candidates for election and appoint more women to senior posts. The United Nations should be commended for having set its own target of 50 per cent gender distribution in the Secretariat by the year 2000, but that required effective measures. Member States should follow that example; where women were given a chance, their talents could flourish.

56. Her delegation warmly endorsed the recommendations of the conference held recently in Rwanda on the subject of peace, gender and development, which had indicated the need to involve women more actively and at an earlier stage in the prevention and management of conflicts. Women's influence on decision-making concerning national and international conflicts was minimal, while at the same time women often suffered most during such conflicts, particularly in the face of armed force, ethnic cleansing and rape. Women were particularly skilled at defusing potential conflicts, but structural and cultural obstacles prevented their participation in decision-making; that could be changed only by overturning set patterns of thought and eliminating prejudice.

57. Education, training and equal rights were all clearly linked, and international institutions must direct their policies much more towards the participation of girls and women in education and training. Women passed on their knowledge to their children, and needed to take practical decisions about spending money on educating children, birth control and health. Development programmes in that field still tended to focus on primary education, but if the labour market was to function properly it was essential to include vocational education and lifelong learning. Girls and women could compete better if trained in new technologies. The only way to achieve that result was to set goals with quantifiable results and specific timetables. The international community must continue to wage war on tenacious prejudices based on artificial stereotypes. Other obstacles included lack of affordable childcare and inflexible working hours.

58. Another important topic was that of women and the economy. Increasing numbers of women had taken on the role of family breadwinner; they were very important, economically speaking, but invisible in the institutions where policies were developed and implemented. The influence of women in such organizations as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund should be enhanced. Women were too often absent from the managerial or supervisory levels of multinationals and banks and from the upper echelons of trade unions. The United Nations and its Member States should implement, as soon as possible, the recommendations of the Commission on the Status of Women aimed at improving the position of women on the labour market. One of those recommendations was that women should be accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property. Women's access to credit should also be improved.

59. The optional protocol to the Convention currently being elaborated would enable women throughout the world to assert their rights by means of a complaints procedure. Her delegation believed that it should also provide for investigation by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women of violations of the Convention. She expressed the hope that negotiations on the optional protocol would be brought to a successful conclusion in 1998, and that as many Member States as possible would ratify it, so that women all over the world could claim respect for their human rights in the new millennium.

60. **Ms. Sugimori** (Japan) expressed her delegation's appreciation and support for the action taken by the United Nations system to follow up the Economic and Social Council's recent decision on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes. Japan hoped that the General Assembly would direct all its subsidiary bodies to pursue that goal and would bring it to the attention of other bodies of the United Nations system.

61. Japan had recently adopted a national plan of action for promotion of a gender-equal society by the year 2000: it was Japan's fourth such plan, the first having been adopted in 1977. The plan of action called for integrating the gender perspective in all policy areas, and contained concrete measures to be implemented by the year 2000. Its objectives included reviewing social systems and practice from the gender perspective, eliminating violence against women, promoting respect for human rights in the media, and providing lifelong support for women's health. Japan was committed to strengthening cooperation with international and regional organizations as well as the national machinery of other countries and non-governmental organizations around the world.

62. Since women usually shouldered a greater share of family responsibilities, their role as caregivers was crucial. In a rapidly aging society, where older persons were predominantly women, the issue of caregiving was more serious. Unpaid caregiving work often adversely affected women in economic and social terms. Her delegation hoped that that issue would be highlighted at the next session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

63. In 1998, the international community would observe the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fifth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Vienna Declaration affirmed that the human rights of women and girls were an integral part of universal human rights, and Japan was committed to ensuring those rights.

64. Violence against women was a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality and full respect for the human rights of women. Japan welcomed the role which the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) played, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/166. Her Government would work actively to combat violence against women in full partnership with international and regional organizations, Governments and civil society.

65. Her delegation looked forward to the review in the year 2000 of progress in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action. That review must be conducted in such a way as to ensure the participation of civil society and non-governmental organizations around the world. Japan reaffirmed its commitment to participating actively in the preparations as well as in the overall review and appraisal in the year 2000.

66. **Ms. Kaba Camara** (Côte d'Ivoire) expressed her delegation's support for the statement made by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The activities undertaken by the international community over the past year in the area of the advancement of women and the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women were impressive in their number and diversity. Member States, regional organizations, civil society, and financial and development bodies had taken initiatives for the promotion of women.

67. The Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference (A/52/281) described activities for the advancement of women in many of the bodies of the United Nations system; however, very little was said concerning the tangible results of such activities. While congratulating the United Nations on such efforts, she wondered whether the implementation of the Beijing recommendations was not restricted in some cases to organizing studies, research, round tables and seminars. The United Nations system must approach the issue of the advancement of women in a more practical way. It appeared that development bodies were increasingly devoting their efforts to studies the results of which were not exploited, for lack of resources. The multiplication of studies on similar themes could be avoided through the creation of a system of general access to data and research. Improved coordination could release more resources for operational activities.

68. While responsibility for the advancement of women lay primarily with Governments, the support of the international community was essential to those States which were facing economic and political difficulties, the majority of which were in Africa.

69. Like many developing countries, Côte d'Ivoire sorely lacked the funds necessary to carry out projects to promote the advancement of women. The time had come for the international community to consider the question of financing development within the follow-up framework of recent major United Nations conferences. Her delegation deplored the fact that the role of UNIFEM had been reduced to that of a catalyst and that it no longer financed development projects. The UNDP Executive Board might be able to restore the funds that UNIFEM needed to help poor women overcome poverty.

70. The International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had carried out numerous studies which had not been sufficiently utilized by Member States and the United Nations system. In the area of women and the environment, for example, the Institute should find ways to disseminate the results of its research among those working in that field. Her country had launched a project on women and the environment as part of the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference. While the project's impact had been significant, it would have been even better if the women concerned had been able to make use of INSTRAW studies. During the reform process, consideration should be given to ways to strengthen development bodies and increase their resources in order to enhance their effectiveness in the field. In spite of the current unfavourable economic situation, African Governments had demonstrated the political will to provide women, on an equal footing with men, with access to all social and economic structures. The United Nations system should further support that effort not only through studies and research, but also through direct investment aimed at improving the living conditions of women.

71. **Ms. Li Sangu** (China) expressed support for the statement made by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Governments and the relevant agencies of the United Nations system had made great efforts to follow up the Beijing Conference. Regrettably, however, some substantial commitments remained unfulfilled. The international community should therefore continue to strive to achieve the desired objectives at an early date. Poverty eradication was a main objective. Owing to serious shortages of funds and technology, developing countries found it difficult to eliminate poverty through their own efforts. Only by increasing international cooperation and achieving the 0.7 per cent ODA target would it be possible to enhance the ability of developing countries to combat poverty. In that connection, she hoped that funds would be targeted to areas where they were most needed and that sufficient human and material resources would be allocated for the advancement of women.

72. The Chinese Government had always attached great importance to the advancement of women, making equality between men and women a basic goal of its national policy for social development. In accordance with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, vigorous measures had been taken to strengthen national machinery for the advancement of women. Local development programmes for women would be incorporated in general economic and social development plans in order to ensure sufficient resources for the implementation of the Platform for Action. Many governmental departments had drawn up specific targets for women to be achieved in poverty alleviation, decision-making, education, employment and health care. Administrative regulations and policy measures had been formulated to prevent violence against women and protect their rights and interests.

73. **Mrs. Mesdoua** (Algeria) said that in following up the Beijing Platform for Action and integrating the results of the recent major United Nations conferences in order to bring about fundamental changes by the year 2000, it was necessary to protect and promote the basic rights of women, eliminate poverty affecting them, ensure their full participation in public life and decision-making, eliminate all forms of violence against women, educate young girls and promote the economic independence of women. While Governments had the main responsibility for implementing programmes of action, the United Nations also had a major role to play in follow-up, implementation and monitoring in order to enhance the situation of women throughout the world.

74. In addition to its essential role of integrating a gender-specific dimension in all its programmes and policies and ensuring gender equality in the Secretariat, the Organization had a particular responsibility in strengthening international cooperation with regard to women's issues by taking into account the outcome of the recent major conferences. United Nations bodies that promoted the advancement of women must have the necessary human and financial means to carry out their work. Sufficient resources were required at both the national and international level to ensure successful programme implementation.

75. Algeria intended to carry out the commitments that it had undertaken at the Beijing Conference and was aware of the importance of the role of women in building a society. Along the measures taken in that regard, her Government had set up a standing committee made up of representatives of ministries and non-governmental organizations to follow up the recommendations of the Beijing Conference. It had also established a national council for women to coordinate the work by the authorities and women's groups, submitted a revised family code for consideration by the National Assembly and supported the women's movement in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

76. Her Government intended to consolidate and promote further the rights of women. For their part, Algerian women had already shown their determination to struggle for national independence and built a democratic and pluralistic State. They believed that the struggle for emancipation would be successful only if all women were united in efforts to eliminate intolerance and violence against women.

77. **Mr. Sotirov** (Bulgaria) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union. In order to take effective legislative and political measures to ensure equality between women and men, Bulgaria had adopted a national plan of action in 1996 aimed at protecting the human rights of women, improving their economic and social status, eradicating female poverty, promoting the participation of women in decision-making, improving the health of women and eliminating all forms of violence against women. The new Government, which had taken office in May 1997, had reinvigorated the process of empowering women. A considerable number of high-level governmental posts were held by women. In carrying out the complicated process of economic structural adjustment, Bulgaria relied to a significant extent on cooperation with international organizations.

78. His Government attached the utmost importance to its obligations under the international human rights instruments and reiterated its support for United Nations activities aimed

at achieving equality between women and men. The work of the Commission on the Status of Women was of particular importance in that regard. His country remained fully committed to achieving the strategic goals of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

79. **Ms. Trone** (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) stressed the need to take programme decisions and allocate resources in order to implement the decisions adopted at the Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing Conferences. The implementation of those decisions had become the major focus of the Fund's work. Its commitment to the promotion of reproductive rights, gender equality and equity, and male responsibility underlay UNFPA-assisted programmes at all levels. Although the bulk of its support went to country-level reproductive-health and advocacy programmes, the Fund had also been actively involved in several collaborative arrangements both with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations. Such work had focused on promoting reproductive and sexual health rights within the human-rights framework; enhancing adolescent reproductive health; promoting gender equity and equality, including the empowerment of women; and strengthening the gender perspective in policies and programmes.

80. In the area of reproductive rights, the Fund's activities would include training for the staff of UNFPA, Governments and non-governmental organizations and increased collaboration between the Fund and treaty bodies to promote reproductive rights within the context of human rights. Other activities included the promotion of policies and legislation in 51 countries to improve women's access to reproductive health care and to advance women's reproductive and sexual health rights. In the field of reproductive health for young people, UNFPA had conducted a country-level survey to eradicate female genital mutilation; and preliminary results indicated that advocacy and counselling in that area were taking place. Various advocacy efforts were also being mounted to address the problem of sexual exploitation of youth and provide a channel to voice the views and aspirations of young women worldwide.

81. In promoting gender equity and equality, UNFPA supported numerous international, regional and national women's non-governmental organizations to enable them to conduct advocacy and research in implementation of the Cairo and Beijing commitments. Gender perspectives and issues were being incorporated into all the Fund's programmes and technical activities. A new conceptual framework and preliminary indicators on gender mainstreaming had been formulated. UNFPA had increased its collaboration with UNIFEM to promote work in the field of gender, population and development. Within UNFPA itself, the Fund was committed to ensuring a strong role for women in decision-making and managerial positions. Women currently made up 46 per cent of its professional staff and more than half of its top-level management.

82. **Ms. Bouverie** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that, with regard to women and development, the Federation was continuing to strengthen support for projects focusing on sustainable income generation, training programmes in disaster preparedness and community-based health care, programmes to promote literacy and awareness of women's human and legal rights, and health programmes, including family planning and reproductive health. In a number of African countries, income-generation activities had been undertaken; and a training manual had recently been produced to train women as leaders of clubs and women's groups. In the Asia and Pacific region, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society had developed a programme to recruit and train women as cyclone-preparedness volunteers.

83. The Federation emphasized the importance of a gender perspective in its policies and programmes, recognizing that men and women had different needs and capacities, particularly in times of emergencies. Action to be taken included establishing regional and subregional networks; developing tools to incorporate gender sensitivity in programme design, implementation and evaluation; raising awareness among staff and managers; and monitoring progress made.

84. The Federation's secretariat in Geneva strongly supported the work of national societies and requested gender-specific data from them. Delegates sent to the field were regularly briefed on the importance of gender integration; and regional newsletters on gender issues were published on a regular basis. Nevertheless, there was still much to be done. A global policy on gender integration needed to be developed to give a clear indication of what gender meant to the Federation as a whole. More women needed to be encouraged to assume positions of responsibility in the field. Lastly, more case studies had to be examined in order to determine how best to incorporate a gender perspective into all operations, including those for women and girl refugees and women migrant workers. In that connection, she welcomed United Nations support for action to eliminate violence against women, including women migrant workers.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.